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BOOK REVIEW - TWO ON TIMOR

Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong. THE WAR AGAINST EAST TIMOR. London, Zed Books Ltd., 1984. Softcover. 253 pp. 6.95 pounds. Available from Biblio Distributor Center, 81 Adams Drive, Totowa, NJ 07512, or TAPOL, 8a Treport Street, London SW18 2BP.

EAST TIMOR AFTER INTEGRATION. Jakarta, Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, March 1984 (2nd edition). Softcover. 143 pp. Complimentary. Available from Embassy of Indonesia, 2020 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

The warakawuri came to Dili and Baucau this July 27. Warakawuri--not just any widows (janda), but the widows of the Indonesian Armed Forces' dead, the fallen in Timor Timur. From all corners of Indonesia, Armed Forces Commander Gen. Murdani gathered the families together, flew them in Air Force transport to Timor, escorted them to the Timor Timur Heroes' Cemeteries in ABRI's two main staging areas on the island, and addressed them. "Let us wipe away our tears and sadness. As religious people, we must realize the meaning of birth, life, and death. Everything is in God's hands, and what happened to them was His will." The people of Timor would tend these graves in the best possible way, the general said, because they felt the heroes lying here were their own kith and kin. Soon the solemn ceremonies ended, Gen. Murdani and an assemblage of senior officers who had served in Timor consoled the bereaved, and the aircraft lifted off.

Not an interview in the newspapers from the warakawuri. No names for these buried heroes. No counts of the war dead. No salutes to their commanders. No reasons given for why the fallen had not been returned to their homes throughout Indonesia for burial. No reasons given for why 9 years had passed before this day of remembrance. No reasons given for not commemorating these heroes earlier in Jakarta or anywhere else outside Timor. No reasons given for not calling them heroes before. No reasons given for not recording their deaths in the press. No reasons, no reasons.

And no mention of yet another new Indonesian offensive in June to vanquish the many times vanquished Fretilin remnants. No mention of the new mass flight of civilians to inaccessible mountain areas. No mention of yet more Indonesian-trained Timorese having defected wholesale with their arms to join the resistance. No mention of Timorese youth fleeing conscription. No mention of the curfews in Dili or the nightly patrol of tanks. No mention of the daily surveillance overflights of Dili. No mention of three new battalions of troops encamped outside town. No mention of helicopters bringing more wounded to Dili's military hospital. No mention of the weekly hospital flights out for the seriously wounded. No mention of yet more burials in the Timor Timur Heroes Cemeteries. No mention, no mention.

And why were Timorese again being taken from their homes at night and arrested? Why had an elderly priest recently been beaten by soldiers at Balide, outside Dili? Why had soldiers also beaten two Salesian priests at Fatumaca, near Baucau? Why had Monsignor Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo, the Apostolic Administrator of Dili, been taken in June to Kodam XVI/Udayana (Nusatenggara) headquarters in Bali for three days of questioning? Why at the Indonesian Catholics Bishops Conference (MAWI) in Jakarta in July had Monsignor Belo, a young, inexperienced Timorese cleric sent from Portugal in May the previous year, become so deeply disillusioned as to say, "We live under oppression. The Timorese want peace and liberty, but at present the whole of East Timor is like a prison." Why, why?

According to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry's EAST TIMOR AFTER INTEGRATION, there has never been a war under Indonesia's watch in East Timor. "Joined by Indonesian volunteers who had responded to the call of their Timorese brothers for aid, the forces of the four (political) parties pressed speedily forward, and captured Dili on December 7, 1975.... The liberation of Dili ended four months of bloodshed and suffering for the East Timorese." (p. 50) A Provisional Government was formed. "Amnesty was granted to nearly all former FRETILIN soldiers." (p. 52) The Indonesian parliament (DPR) approved a bill of integration on July 15, 1976. Development funds and humanitarian aid poured into the new province. A new civil administration proceeded through rehabilitation, consolidation, and stabilization stages. "Many" foreign governmental and non-governmental dignitaries and "scores of foreign journalists" made "extensive" tours of the province. (p. 79)

The reader searches in vain for any mention of generals Murdani, Dading Kalbuadi, Soeweno, Yogie S. Memet, Kahpi Suriadiredja, Supardjo, Soelarso, Rudini, Try Sutrisno, Edy Sudradjat, Sembiring Meliala, A.S. Rajagukguk, and Soetedjo, all veterans of Timor military operations. Even General Jusuf, the previous Armed Forces Commander who once flew to Timor weekly to oversee operations and be with his troops, is not around. A war in East Timor? Tidak ada.

One expects propaganda from any foreign ministry. But EAST TIMOR AFTER INTEGRATION does more than strain credulity. For whom was it written? It's a glossy English edition with color pictures presumably for overseas readers who want or need Indonesia's reasoned version of the Timor issue. But this apologia doesn't appear in an informational vacuum. Jill Jolliffe's 1978 EAST TIMOR: NATIONALISM & COLONIALISM made a substantial impact abroad, despite its narrow focus on the September-December 1975 period and glossing over of Fretilin weaknesses. James Dunn's 1983 TIMOR: A PEOPLE BETRAYED was much more impressive with its steady magisterial hand in chronicling events through 1982, albeit with an Australian's sometimes too long focus on his own country's belabored involvement. Many Timor support groups have published valuable detailed material. Foreign governments' intelligence agencies have kept informed through their own many means.

EAST TIMOR AFTER INTEGRATION could not possibly be taken seriously by any informed foreigner. It's the sort of work which might be believed by Indonesians at home who continue to live with a press blackout on military operations in Timor. Even then, enough gets through to make one of the great imponderables in assessing Indonesia's stability, ABRI's popular legitimacy, and ABRI's internal cohesion the question of which groups in Indonesia know and feel precisely what about Timor. The reader might reasonably conclude that EAST TIMOR AFTER INTEGRATION was written by fairly well-informed Indonesian foreign ministry bureaucrats under instructions to put a favorable construction on a collation of official lines not credible to anyone, Indonesian or foreign, except the informationally cocooned denizens of utterly uninterested or closed societies. In short, the book is a shameless forgery of reality. It is not simply an insult to the attentive world community but to Indonesian national ideals of consultative democracy, humanitarianism, and social justice.

THE WAR AGAINST EAST TIMOR is a truly devastating critique and broad-ranging indictment of the Indonesian government's invasion, occupation, and continuing war in East Timor. It is both an intellectual and political tour de force which uncannily repeatedly routs the mighty machine of Indonesian state censorship, disinformation, restricted access to Timor, and force majeure. The authors, Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong, are associated with TAPOL and the Komitee Indonesia in the U.K. and Netherlands, respectively. Indeed, this book could only have been written by such long interested parties who have earned the trust of their wide array of often threatened information sources in Indonesia and around the world.

About two-thirds of the book is original text and one-third a translation of captured Indonesian military documents dating from the second half of 1982. The latter consist of classified field guidance issued by then commander of Military Sub-area Command (Korem) 164/Wira Dharma Col. Adolf Sahala Rajagukguk and his then intelligence assistant Major Williem da Costa. Korem 164 covers the whole of East Timor and falls under Kodam XVI/Udayana headquartered in Denpasar, Bali. The documents, which condone torture and threats to life under interrogation, apparently made their way from Fretilin to Amnesty International in July 1983, which made them available to concerned parties.

Without citing any particulars, the Indonesian government has denied their authenticity. This reviewer has examined the original documents. It is evident from their typewritten and sometimes hand-lettered appearance, internal formats, official stamps, military Indonesian, selection of military tactics, depiction of military organizational structures, citation of place names, knowledge of personal names, and consistency with other known events occurring at the time that the documents are genuine beyond any reasonable doubt.

These documents are important because they give the lie to repeated Indonesian government claims that Fretilin had been finished off, military actions by all parties had virtually terminated, and Indonesian protracted military maneuvers had been inspired by lofty motives. Instead, the documents reveal Indonesian military operations to be in considerable disarray and frustrated by a resurgent Fretilin employing a new and more sophisticated guerrilla warfare strategy reliant in significant degree on its own intelligence apparatus with deep roots even among Timorese literally under armed guard by the Indonesian army.

The authors' text in THE WAR AGAINST EAST TIMOR provides the closest thing yet to a history of military operations in Timor from before the Dili invasion till about early 1984. The ceasefire of early 1983, the Indonesian military's negotiations with Fretilin, Gen. Murdani's sabotaging of this try at a political solution shortly after he became ABRI Commander, Fretilin's peace plan, repeated failed ABRI efforts to "Timorize" the war, the population control program, the abuse of inadequate central government development assistance, and forced cultural change are all explicated lucidly. The book also contains a very helpful chronology and maps which facilitate following the stream of events.

If there are flaws in this effort, they may be the occasional uncritical quotation of florid Fretilin prose, some minimizing of the inevitable wastage of life inherent in Fretilin's own reliance on violent struggle, and what comes across to the reader in the first and last paragraphs of text as confusion of a unilateral Fretilin proclamation of Timorese independence with an act of self-determination which would be legally recognizable in international law.

Indonesia's military and security apparatus in Timor continues to be bogged down by small bands of determined guerrillas fighting for a freedom which could have easily been theirs had the Western world's democracies paid more attention to its own political ideals in 1975. And in this book Indonesia's propagandists and diplomats find themselves humbled by an even smaller determined band of human rights activists whose weapons are intellectual adroitness and truth. Let the world's foreign ministries take note now of the heroes.

—John A. MacDougall

Ed. - John A. MacDougall is the editor of INDONESIA REPORTS. Previously he conducted research for the US government on the Indonesian military.